

To the Chairman and Members of the Northampton Rural District Council.

JANUARY, 1903.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present my Report for the year 1903, with the usual tables. In estimating the population for the year, I have assumed it to be stationary—the slight increase during the previous ten years was caused by extensive building operations in Duston; during the last year there have not been so many cottages built here, and I think my estimate is about correct.

The total number of births during the year was 139, giving a birth rate of 26 per 1,000 on a population of 5345—that is by excluding Berry Wood Asylum. This birth rate is much below the average of the last ten years, and is the smallest that has occurred. The next smallest was 149 in 1899, so that there is a considerable decrease.

The number of deaths in children under one year of age was only 17, giving a ratio per 1,000 births registered of 122. Last year there were 18 deaths in this class, and in the previous year 15; these three years represent the smallest number of deaths during the last ten years, whilst in 1895 there were 30 deaths in children under one year.

The total number of deaths during the year was 186, giving a rate of 29·4 per 1,000. Of these deaths, however, 121 occurred in Berry Wood Asylum, so that, by deducting these as deaths of non-residents, there are only left 65 deaths of persons really resident in the district, with the small death rate of 12 per 1,000. This is the smallest number of deaths during the last ten years, the next lowest being 71 in 1900, whilst in 1897 it was 98. The deaths in the Weston Favell district were exceedingly small (only 8), whilst in the Duston district they were 19, which is above the average, and in the Kislingbury district again they were 10 below the average of the last ten years.

Table II. gives the statistics for the whole district, and also for the different sub-districts.

Table III. shows the cases of Infectious disease notified during the year. There was a total of 30 cases, against 21 in 1901 and 12 in 1900. At first sight this seems rather a large increase, but it is accounted for by the epidemic of Scarlet Fever which broke out at Duston late in the summer; 23 cases being reported—12 from Duston and 11 from Berry Wood Asylum. Excepting this epidemic, no other case of Scarlet Fever was reported from any other village in the district during the year. The cases were almost entirely among school children, and I think must have had something to do with the bad smells prevailing in the village, especially about the school premises. On investigation it was found that some of the new drains had been laid into the old sewers, and this mistake has now been remedied. Fortunately the epidemic was a mild one, and no deaths from this disease have been reported. The schools in this village were kept closed for several weeks till the epidemic was exhausted.

Two cases of Diphtheria were reported, and unfortunately both proved fatal. The first occurred in a group of three cottages at Duston, where Diphtheria broke out in a previous year. I considered that it must be due to defective drainage, as the drains and drain openings were very near the cottages, and I advised that the drains should be diverted. The second case happened at Kislingbury, in a group of cottages near the river. I could find no explanation for it, the drainage was good, the closets were a long way from the cottages, and they all drank the same water. The disease did not spread, and no one in this group of houses caught the infection, though another child was living in the same cottage.

The only other cases of Infectious disease notified were two cases of Enteric Fever; one in a man aged between 40 and 50 at Weston Favell. This man worked in the town and took most of his meals there, so, as there was no sign of any other case in the village, I think he must have contracted the disease elsewhere. The man was seriously ill for some time, but eventually recovered.

Besides the two deaths from Diphtheria, there were five other deaths from Infectious disease, giving a total of 7, and a zymotic death rate of 1·1 per 1,000, rather lower than in the previous year, when there were 8 deaths from these diseases. These other deaths included 2 from Measles, 2 from Whooping Cough, and 1 from Diarrhœa, all in the Duston district.

Regarding deaths other than from Infectious disease, there is little to say, except that the number from Phthisis (9) was somewhat above the average. In Berry Wood Asylum, however, no less than 26 deaths were certified as due to different forms of tubercular disease.



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Although no other cases of Enteric Fever broke out in this district, a rather serious, though happily small, epidemic of Enteric Fever broke out in Northampton, and was traced to contaminated milk from a dairy at Upton. The man who lived at the farm and superintended the dairy contracted Enteric Fever from eating contaminated oysters, and, on comparing dates, it became evident that some infected material on a certain day must have infected the milk before the disease was recognized. The cases all broke out within a few days of each other; they were very severe, and there were several deaths. The sale of milk from this dairy was at once stopped, and the proprietor has now relinquished dairy farming. The farm yard was in a very bad state from large accumulations of manure.

The drainage scheme at Duston has now been completed, and the new drains have all been properly connected with the new sewers. The septic tank, into which the sewer runs, must be considered as still on its trial; I cannot say that I have been satisfied with the effluent on my visits to it. The effluent from the tank is very black and foul, but the land on to which it runs is so absorbent being a portion of some old ironstone excavations, and so far from other buildings, that no nuisance is at present created, and no complaints of it have been received.

A scheme is now in contemplation by which the sewage from the village of Bugbrooke will be intercepted and purified before its discharge into the river.

The water supplies at Kislingbury and Heyford are in good working order, and no complaint of scarcity of water has reached me from other villages, though the rainfall is still so very deficient, and many of the wells in some parts of the county are very low.

Fortunately no case of Small Pox has occurred in this district, though a village in a neighbouring district has suffered rather severely. I regret that your Council has at present no hospital in which to isolate such cases should they occur, but several schemes for obtaining a site for such a building have been before you and have had to be abandoned, mostly because of the very great objections raised by neighbours to the erection of such a building. It seems to me that the most feasible scheme would be for the County Council to use their powers and group districts for the purpose of establishing Isolation Hospitals.

Some dilapidated and dirty cottages at Weston Favell have been condemned by me, and steps are in progress to remedy them.

The dairies and cowsheds are visited and reported upon half-yearly by the Inspector, and your Council have now adopted the Model Bye-laws of the Local Government Board for this district, which come into force at the beginning of the present year (1903). As a standard is thus set up for all dairies, I anticipate a great improvement in this respect during the coming year. On visiting different dairies, I have been struck by the fact that though the drainage in the cowsheds is good, the yards themselves are often in a bad state from imperfect drainage and accumulations of manure. I cannot see any regulation in the Model Bye-laws to prevent this, and I think it may be a fruitful source of mischief from the cows' udders becoming splashed and contaminated by this offensive matter. From the returns furnished by your Inspector, I find that there are in the district 32 dairies, 47 cowsheds, and 23 cases in which milk is sold from the door. In almost all cases the cows are in the fields during the daytime.

The new Factory Act has now come into operation, and by one of its clauses it is essential that I should report on its operation in your district. There is only one small factory at Kislingbury, which may be regarded really as only an enlarged workshop. There are a good many small workshops, especially in the village of Harpole, and, choosing this village because it contains about three-fourths of the workshops of your district, I have made a tour of them with the Medical Officer of Health for the County and the Factory Inspector. They are mostly small workshops fitted up by the cottage tenant, in which himself and one or more of his family work at boot making. We found very little indeed with which fault could be found, and such faults were notified to the Sanitary Inspector, who has supervised their rectification. On the whole this Act seems to apply with very little force to this district, from a sanitary point of view, as there are so few cases in which it comes into operation, and the respective duties of the Factory Inspector and Sanitary Authority seem to be complicated and to overlap very much. The bakehouses are clean and regularly whitewashed; there are no underground bakehouses.

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

G. H. PERCIVAL,

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

